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AUTHOR Carlson, Ruth Kearney
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Abstract

Children's literature is discussed in terms of 10 values which it may bring to readers. Some of these values are personal, involving pleasure, imagination, literary appreciation, or a chance to identify with the hero in a book. Some of the values are functional, involving information about today's world; discussions of art, music, or literature; or accounts of factual history. Each of the 10 values discussed is illustrated by a listing of several books which deal with that value on levels for children of various ages. A 91-item bibliography is included. (MD)

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Dr. Ruth Kearney Carlson
Professor of Education
Cal State College at Hayward
25800 Hillary Avenue
Hayward, California
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Ten Values of Children's Literature

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Undoubtedly, children's literature has countless values, but this paper will focus upon ten benefits of good literature enjoyed by children from three to fifteen years of age. It is difficult to distinguish between adult and child literature. Ordinarily, mature books have more pages, and offer more complex plots and characterizations, and are more concerned with sex and mayhem. Many values of children's literature can be cited, but the most precious benefit is the delight and enchantment which good literature affords boys and girls.

Competent observers can measure enjoyment by subjective means such as the sparkle in a child's eye as he shares his favorite book about a horse or a dog, a sense of kinship which peers have when they discuss The Borrowers (57) or Wind in the Willows, a deep sense of involvement in difficulties of Wilbur and Charlotte in Charlotte's Web, (88) or the quiet contemplative look of a boy curled up in a chair immersing himself in A Wrinkle in Time (39). Some children enjoy literature for its therapeutic value. A boy who reads The Loner (90) by Ester Wier empathizes with the nameless child who wanders alone to migrant camps, and the controversial book, Drop Dead (13), by Julia Cunningham depicts a lonely boy and his inner turmoil concerning the meaning of security and conformity.

Younger boys and girls enjoy poetry when it is presented in an enjoyable manner. The very young child relishes the rhythm of the words in "Mrs. Peck Pigeon" by Eleanor Farjeon, or "Jump and Jiggle" by E. Beyer. He struts as a pigeon or pantomimes the movement of creatures jumping and jiggling. He can march up and down a hill to the "Grand Old Duke of York" or listen to the rhythm and story of "The Pasture" by Robert Frost. A child loves melodious lines in poetry or prose or listens to the alliterative tune of S in "Sea Shell" by Amy Lowell or the W and Wh sounds giving the speed of a train in "Whickety-Whack" by Aileen Fisher. Again he may listen to the words of Margaret Wise Brown in "Little Black Bug" or be lulled by the tune of "April Rain Song" by Langston Hughes. Occasionally a child may dramatize such a poem as "A Fairy Went A Marketing" by Rose Fyleman or "The Owl and the Pussycat" by Edward Lear.

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Older children enjoy reading horse and animal stories. Boys and girls in the fifth and sixth grades immerse themselves in books by such an author as Marguerite Henry. Her volumes such as Misty of Chincoteague (25), King of the Wind (26), and Gaudenzia, Pride of the Palio (27) are

relived imaginatively. Somehow boys and girls can identify with the words of Mrs. Henry as her distinctive prose recreates the training of horses in White Stallion of Lipizza (28). They sense the cruelty and avaraciousness of hunters who almost destroyed mustangs for dog food in Mustang, Wild Spirit of the West (29).

Other books of realistic fiction are appreciated by intermediate grade children who are finding their places in a peer group. A poignant book enjoyed by such readers is The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes. Poor Wanda Petronski, a Polish child from a motherless family tries to win friends by telling about her hundred dresses even though she daily wears a faded, well-ironed dress to school. Peggy and her satellite, Maddie, taunt the child because she is different. Another story about friends and poverty is The Noonday Friends by Mary Stolz. The contrast of ideals between Simone who desires a beautiful world and Franny who recognizes ugliness is clearly delineated, and a quarrel plays a central part in the story.

Good literature extends the imaginative power of childhood in a way to allow readers to cope with every day life problems. Such classics as Alice in Wonderland (8) and The Wizard of Oz (4) pave the way for science fiction and moon landings. An unusual fantasy involving the kingdom of Tatrajan is Tatsinda (19) by Elizabeth Enright. All of the animals have names that commence with "ti"; the names of people start with "ta". C. S. Lewis introduces the country of Narnia in his seven fantasies, which commence with The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (41). Lloyd Alexander has capitalized upon Welsh legends and mythology in his imaginary land of Prydain. The High King is an exciting adventure fantasy where the forces of good and evil battle with each other, as valiant heroes fight to destroy the dreadful cauldron which creates "mute and deathless warriors". In addition to Charlotte's Web (88), young children love Stuart Little (89), an earlier book by E. B. White, which offers many amusing adventures to a little mouse boy who even substitutes as a teacher. In The Mousewife (20) by Rumer Godden children sense the friendship between a timid turtledove and a busy small mousewife. Again, children are pleased with such animal fantasies as Rabbit Hill (37) and the Tough Winter (38) by Robert Lawson. In these books one finds that animals also look at humans as strange persons. An English fantasy author, Mary Norton, has created the miniature world in The Borrowers (57). This has been followed by such sequels as The Borrowers Afield (58), The Borrowers Aloft (60), and The Borrowers Afloat (59). Pod and Homily Clock are disturbed when Arrietty wants to discover a larger world, and the problems of these lilliputran creatures capture the imaginations of children who even form Borrower's Clubs.

The imaginative power of very young children can be extended through such stories as And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street (79) by Dr. Seuss, Tico and the Golden Wing (48) by Lionni, and Sam Bangs and Moonshine (55) by Evaline Ness. Dr. Seuss has created many highly imaginative books but his earlier one on Marco's fantastic daydreams on Mulberry Street offers opportunity for amusing daydreams. Younger boys and girls can imagine that they have a Wishing Bird similar to the one in Tico and the Golden Wings (48). Boys and girls who read Sam Bangs and Moonshine (55) can have fun distinguishing between real talk and moonshine talk, and can empathize with Samantha who dreams of mermaids, lions and baby kangaroos.

Literature can enlarge imaginative horizons, but it also develops an appreciation for beauty. Primitive man expressed nearness to nature through ritual chants such as those reproduced by Richard Lewis in Out of the Earth I Sing (42) or in The Sky Clears (15) by A. Grove Day. Both of these volumes reproduce a ritualistic Navaho chant commencing with the words, "The voice that beautifies the land". Eskimos add their original rhythmical verse to Beyond the High Hills (71) which is accompanied by magnificent color photographs by Father Guy Mary-Rousseliere, an Oblate priest. Natalia Belting reproduces beauty and a sense of closeness to nature in such volumes as The Earth Is On A Fish's Back (5), The Stars Are Silver Reindeer (6), and The Sun Is A Golden Earring (7). Each of these books reproduces ideas about nature by people around the world. A recent volume, The Wind Has Wings (18) Poems from Canada, compiled by Mary Alice Downie and Barbara Robertson also speaks of beauty in the dramatic flaming forests of Canada. Patricia Hubbell offers poetic glimpses of beauty in Catch Me A Wind (32). Both "Gemini" and "To the Sun" offer a closeness between a poet and the heavens.

Another type of beauty and kinship with nature is felt in such novels as Island of the Blue Dolphins (62) and The Black Pearl (63) by Scott O'Dell or Ishi, Last of His Tribe (35) by Theodora Kroeber. In all of these volumes children sense the beauty and terror of loneliness as man seeks to survive against the forces of the elements such as a roaring ocean, the raging wind or unknown monsters of the sea.

A third type of man's nearness to beauty is expressed in Oriental verses such as the Japanese haiku form. Richard Lewis has contributed greatly to this philosophy of beauty in The Moment of Wonder (43) a collection of Chinese and Japanese Poetry which is illustrated with paintings by Chinese and Japanese masters. Lewis has also created three books with striking photographs by Helen Buttfield. One of these is Of This World (44), A Poet's Life in Poetry which depicts the life and poetry of the Japanese Haiku poet, Issa. The other two books are The Wind and the Rain (45) and The Park (46). In A Spring Garden (47) is edited by Lewis and is illustrated with dramatic colored pictures by Ezra Jack Keats. Poems in each of these sources focus upon the quiet immediacy of beauty.

A fourth value of children's literature is its contribution to the growth of a more compassionate or humane human being. In this modern world of violence, the compassionate individual is often forgotten. In "Renascence", the poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay speaks of "the compassion that was I". Younger girls sympathize with Sarah in The Courage of Sarah Noble (14) by Alice Dalgliesh and with the brave girl in The Princess and the Lion (12) by Elizabeth Coatsworth. Sarah Noble has to conquer fear with courage while alone in the wilderness with owls, wolves, and unknown Indians. The little Abyssinian princess in the Coatsworth story travels a dangerous journey with Asafa, her mule, and Menelik the lion, to save a kingdom for her imprisoned brother, Prince Michael. Little Paco, the Indian in the Stinetorf volume, A Charm for Paco's Mother (80), feels charity and compassion for many others as he desperately seeks to pray at the great stone cross on Christmas eve. A kid is caught dangling in a rabbit snare, and a wheel on Zorro's cart needs mending. Malinchina, a little girl has to be cared for while the

miller seeks a new tree for a wheel. Then there is the stranger at Mitla and the little charcoal worker, Miguel, who desperately needs a warm coat.

One feels great compassion for Negro slave, Estebanico, whose character is so beautifully dilineated in Walk the World's Rim (3) by Betty Baker. This is the tale of the Cabeza de Vaca expedition as seen through the eyes of Chakoh, an Indian lad who suffers hunger and many hardships in accompanying the expedition. Chakoh learns that the world is a large place and the white man's god is different from his Spirit of Misfortune. One can also empathize with Ishi in Ishi, Last of His Tribe (35) when he realizes that the death of each one of the old people means less surviving members for his tribe until at last he is alone. Again, children can empathize with Manolo in Shadow of a Bull (91). Although he is the son of the greatest bullfighter in Spain, he does not have that afición or unconquerable urge to fight the bull, and he must make a decision to do what he wants to do in spite of the Spanish community's expectations. A beautiful novel for older children is North to Freedom (31) by Anne Holm. David has lived twelve years in a concentration camp until he is suddenly allowed to escape. This odyssey takes the boy from prison camp to Salonika and north to Denmark. David has to learn that there is a green and gold world in contrast to the gray oppressiveness of ugly prison life. He also needs to create a God of his own, a God of green pastures.

A fifth value of good literature is its wonderland of words. Readers of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass (8) relish the clever puns, similes and images which leap and scurry across this imaginative fantasy. The poem, "Jabberwocky" with its "brillig", "slithy-toves" and "frumius Bandersnatch" gives a grasp of the original courage of new words by a gifted author.

James Thurber in The Wonderful O (81) offers a satirical fantasy of a world in which all words lack the letter O. Sesyle Joslin carries out somewhat this same idea in her fantasy, The Night They Stole the Alphabet (33). In this book Victoria has many adventures searching for the lost twenty-six letters in strange places. Norton Juster has also introduced a vast kingdom of words when Milo visits the ruler of Dictionopolis in The Phantom Tollbooth (34).

Some specialized books on words for younger boys and girls are Ounce, Dice, Trice (72) by Alastair Reid, Sparkle and Spin (70) by Ann and Paul Rand, A Crowd of Cows (21) by John Graham, and The Alphabet Tree (49) by Leo Leonni. The Reid book coins original words; the book by the Rands offers sparkle to language; the Graham book cleverly discusses groups of words, and The Alphabet Tree (49) beautifully depicts an alphabet tree and a world where the "word bug" patiently teaches letters to form themselves into words.

Mary O'Neill has developed books directly related to the wonderland of words in both Words, Words, Words (65), and Take A Number (66). A clever writer, Eve Merriam, succeeds in making words sparkle in her book, It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme (53). Children reading most literature written by good authors add to their word banks, but literature also offers a vast storehouse of information.

A sixth value of good literature consists in its cultural store of facts which enhances learning in other areas such as history, art, and geography. S. Carl Hirsch has written a history of lithography in Printing from Stone, the Story of Lithography (30). Oscar Ogg, the calligrapher, adds additional information about the alphabet in The 26 Letters (64).

An interesting historical novel is Caxton's Challenge (24) which has been written and illustrated by Cynthia Harnett. This is a fictionalized account of the battle between a firm using scriveners and William Caxton who popularized the printing press in England around 1475. One of the books printed by Caxton was The Canterbury Tales which have been selected and edited by Anne Malcolmson in A Taste of Chaucer (50). Two other books about Chaucer which offer a wealth of information are: They Lived Like This in Chaucer's England (56) by Marie Neurath and John Ellis and Chaucer and His World (78) by Ian Serraillier.

Another fascinating book of word history is The Bayeaux Tapestry (16), the Story of the Norman Conquest; 1066 by Norman Denny and Josephine Filmer-Sankey. This book reproduces the famous tapestry which glorifies the Norman Conquest of England. A recent novel for older children about the Norman Conquest is Banner Over Me (23) by Margery P. Greenleaf. This is a study of two brothers engulfed in the conflict between King Harold of England and William of Normandy. Another type of information is an appreciation of artistic principles.

A seventh value of good literature is its contributions to art appreciation. In recent years colorful books are being written about art, the opera, famous artists, and ballet dancers. Pupils can read these volumes and see their beautiful illustrations which contribute to their cultural growth. The First Book of Paintings (54) by Lamont Moore introduces art appreciation through such aspects as line, shape, space, light, pattern, balance, rhythm, and contrast and unity. The art style of thirty-one different artists is reproduced on these pages. Looking at Pictures (11) by Kenneth Clark also presents such artists as Titian, Rembrandt, Botticelli, and Goya, as well as others.

Frances Robert Nugent has authored a series of small books with approximately sixty-four pages in which each volume focuses upon part of the life and work of one artist. One of these is Jan Van Eyck. Elizabeth Ripley has created a series of biographies of artists on such ones as Botticelli, Dürer (74), Picasso (75) and Vincent Van Gogh (76) as well as many others. A recent book for younger children is Long Ago in Florence (17) by Marion Downer which is the story of Luca della Robbia.

Children can become interested in music through reading biographies of musicians. Opal Wheeler wrote an earlier biography, Ludwig Beethoven and the Chiming Tower Bells (84), and Opal Wheeler and Sybil Deucher have combined their talents to create several biographies such as Franz Schubert and His Merry Friends (85), Joseph Haydn: The Merry Little Peasant (86), Sebastian Bach, the Boy from Thuringia (87) and many others.

Warren Chappell has created lovely books featuring the theme and music of The Nutcracker (9), Sleeping Beauty (10) and others, and Frans Haacken has beautifully illustrated Peter and the Wolf (68) by Serge Prokofieff. Peter and the Wolf (68) offers motivation for involvement activities in creative drama and writing. Literature also helps us to understand ourselves and others better.

A recent book which meets many needs is Tales from the Ballet (69) which is illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen. Ballets are defined as stories with music which are without words. Tales are portrayed such as "The Wood Nymphs," "Ondine," "Billy the Kid," "The Firebird," "Swan Lake," and many others.

An eighth value of good literature is its help in raising the self concept of a child who has a poor picture of himself. In recent years numerous books are being published in the field of black literature as the ghetto child living in an urban environment frequently fails to identify with literary selections written for those persons living in other more favored environments. An inherent danger in such literature lies in a tendency to offer only books of social protest or books about an Afro-American hero such as a baseball player, jazz singer, or person serving the underground railway. Teachers of reading should be cautioned to select black literature of high quality written in good style. Afro-American children are acutely sensitive of their environmental heritage and will be quick to detect "phony" books written to capitalize upon the popular market. Stereotyped characterizations and novels or poetry written in pedestrian language should be avoided.

Two recent books on poetry for urban children are I Am the Darker Brother, An Anthology of Modern Poems by Negro Americans (1), edited by Arnold Adolf and On City Streets (36) An Anthology of Poetry selected by Nancy Larrick, and the collection in I Am the Darker Brother (1) offers such poems as "Juke Box Love Song" by Langston Hughes, "The Glory of the Day Was in Her Face" by James Weldon Johnson and "The Daybreakers" by Arna Bontemps. Some of this literature is dispirited, bitter, and cruel. On City Streets (36) is a collection which offers poetry with more hope and less despair. For instance the much quoted poem "Mother to Son" offers a vision of hope for a better world won through the agonies of toil and privation. Rachel Field sings of city streets where taxes go by like tireless amber-eyed beetles in "Manhattan Lullaby".

An unusual new novel which is biographical in style is The Narrow Path, An African Childhood (77) by Francis Selorney. This is the story of Kofi who was born in a village on the Ghano coast. His grandfather has eight wives and twenty-five children. Kofi's father is educated and a teacher in the village school, but his discipline of the child is merciless. The boy's emotions, grief, terror and despair are intermingled with a mysterious African heritage with a light veneer of Christianity.

An eighth value of excellent children's literature is its part in forming a foundation for more difficult adolescent novels, poems, and dramas. For instance, children who have not had an opportunity to enjoy

the rich storehouse of folktale, myth, legend, and epic stories find little enjoyment in appreciating such classics as The Iliad and The Odyssey. If a child has read a story of "Daedalus and Icarus" he appreciates allusions to such tales in more sophisticated poetry. If a boy or girl is unfamiliar with Jupiter or Zeus, Minerva, Cupid, Psyche, Odin, and other gods and goddesses, he "tunes out" when these allusions appear in later novels and tales. If a speaker mentions "the goose that laid the golden eggs" the reference is lost on the ears of a listener who has never read a traditional tale of "Jack and the Beanstalk".

A ninth value of literature is the heroic image which it gives to childhood. Some pupils can identify with the heroic impulse through reading mediaeval legends which incite the imagination with deeds of prowess. Jennefer Westwood has translated and adapted Medieval Tales (83). In this volume students can read such favorites as Chanticleer, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and such tales as "Aucessin and Nicolette" and "The Story of Roland". Henry Treece has written The Windswept City (82). A novel of the Trojan's war, which relates events through the eyes of Asterius, a slave to the aging and homesick Helen.

In recent years many books about Beowulf have been written for younger children. One of these is Beowulf, the Warricr by Ian Serallier. Several classical heroes appear in William Mayne's Book of Heroes (52) and Hero Tales from the British Isles (67) retold by Barbara Leone Picard. Modern children can visit city museums to study mediaeval types of armor, and they can share a vision of a world where men accepted their responsibilities and faced challenges with courage and strength.

Myths, legends and folktales offer universal values which are world-wide in scope. Most cultures have a favorite cinder lad or cinderella who works diligently under unfavorable circumstances and are rewarded. Folklorists have claimed a thousand versions of the Cinderella motif. Each country has its own variant of a folktale. A child reading Sea Spells and Moor Magic (40) by Sorche Nic Leodhas with its Scotch touch or Leprechaun Tales (22) by Kathleen Green with its Irish Leprechauns or the Oriental flavor of The Crane Maiden (51) by Chihiro Iwasaki learns valueable character traits in a nondictactic manner.

This brief presentation has introduced only ten values of good children's literature. Books bring pleasure to readers and extend imaginative powers. Literature enhances an appreciation of beauty and a kinship with the terror of loneliness in an alien world. Many books help readers to become more compassionate, but people should be sensitive not sentimental beings. Good writers present a wonderland of words, not hackneyed similes and metaphors. Some books offer a cultural storehouse of information. A few selected books for children offer artistic embellishments and an appreciation of the arts. Some literature helps to improve the self concept of children who feel alienated from a middle class Anglo-Saxon culture. A rich heritage of myths, legends, and folk tales blaze trails for more difficult journeys into adult literature. The heroic impulse of pupils can be encouraged through the reading of heroic legends and epics. Literature is world wide in scope and its values are universal. Long ago, Andersen created "The Chinese Nightingale"

a tale in which a little timid bird brought life to a Chinese emperor, but officials of his court preferred the glittering artificialities of a mechanical jewel encrusted bird which was false. Children in our culture should not lose this little nightingale; they should treasure the real, genuine, and beautiful things of life.

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